

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PALERM 00557 251803Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
/066 W

-----115911 260557Z /10

R 251715Z MAY 78
FM AMCONSUL PALERMO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2485
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL TRIESTE
AMCONSUL TURIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: SICILIAN PCI'S SELF-ANALYSIS - MAY 28-29 ADMINISTRATIVE
ELECTIONS

BEGIN SUMMARY. IN SERIES OF AUTO-CRITICAL PARTY MEETINGS AND
STATEMENTS, SICILY'S COMMUNISTS HAVE FULLY ACKNOWLEDGED
MAY 14-15 ELECTORAL SETBACK ASCRIBING IT TO VOTER "DIS-
ORIENTATION" IN WAKE OF MORO EVENTS, TO DETERIORATING ECONOMIC
SITUATION AND TO PCI'S INABILITY TO AFFECT CHANGE DESPITE
PARTY'S INCREASED GOVERNMENT ROLE. NEARLY 118,000 SICILIANS
WILL VOTE ON MAY 28-29. DESPITE HIGH-LEVEL EFFORTS BY ALL
PARTIES TO CHANGE OR CAPITALIZE ON EARLIER VOTE, LOCAL FACTORS
AND SMALLNESS OF SAMPLING COULD DISTORT PATTERNS
WHICH EMERGED FROM MAY 14-15 BALLOTING. END SUMMARY.

1. MAY 14-15 ELECTION RESULTS HAVE PROMPTED THE SICILIAN PCI
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TO INTENSIVE SELF-EXAMINATION. A PAPER PREPARED BY THE
REGIONAL PARTY FEDERATION SUGGESTED THAT:
- THE DROP IN PCI STRENGTH WAS MORE PRONOUNCED IN THE LARGER
MUNICIPALITIES.
- IN COMMUNES IN THE 5,000-10,000 POPULATION BRACKET, FOR EXAMPLE,
THE PARTY MOVED UP FOUR PERCENTAGE POINTS ON ITS 1972
POSITIONS BUT DROPPED BY EIGHT POINTS IN COMPARISON WITH 1976.

- IN COMMUNES ABOVE 10,000 INHABITANTS, THE PCI PROGRESSED ONLY ONE-HALF PERCENTAGE POINT OVER 1972 AND DROPPED 13 POINTS FROM 1976.

2. WHILE THE PCI'S POST-ELECTION ANALYSIS PAID DUE RESPECT TO MORO-MURDER SHOCK, THE PARTY REALISTICALLY IDENTIFIED OTHER MAJOR CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO ITS POOR SHOWING AT THE POLLS. GOVERNMENT INFLATION-CURBS, FOR EXAMPLE, PRODUCED A WORSENING ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN THE MEZZOGIORNO. PARTY AND CGIL APPEALS FOR AUSTERITY WERE TAKEN AS A SIGN OF IMPENDING WAGE AND PENSION CUTS RATHER THAN AS A CREDIBLE APPEAL FOR NECESSARY SACRIFICE.

3. THE SICILIAN PCI ALSO RECOGNIZED VOTER REALIZATION THAT WHILE THE PARTY DOES NOW HAVE A VOICE IN GOVERNMENT, IT HAS SO FAR BEEN UNABLE TO PRODUCE RESULTS. PARTY HAS ACCORDINGLY SWORN TO BE MORE RECEPTIVE AND RESPONSIVE TO WHAT ITS VOTERS WANT, AND TO BE MORE VIGOROUS IN PUSHING REGIONAL GOVERNMENT INTO ACTION.

4. IN MEANTIME, SICILY WILL GO TO POLLS AGAIN ON MAY 28-29. A TOTAL OF 117,889 REGISTERED VOTERS WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN 25 MUNICIPALITIES SCATTERED IN SIX PROVINCES (AGRIGENTO, CALTANISSETTA, CATANIA, ENNA, MESSINA AND PALERMO). TWELVE OF THESE COMMUNES WILL VOTE BY THE PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM. NONE OF THEM EXCEEDS 20,000 INHABITANTS.
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5. THE MAY 14-15 RESULTS HAVE STIMULATED ALL PARTIES TO MAXIMUM EFFORT TO OVERTURN EARLIER RESULTS OR TO CONFIRM THEM. EXAMPLE: A PARADE OF TOP-LEVEL TALENT (PAJETTA, MALAGODI, ZANONE, LAURICELLA, RUFFINI, REGIONAL PRESIDENT MATTARELLA) HAVE ALL MADE CAMPAIGN APPEARANCES IN CEFALU', A TOURIST TOWN OF 15,000 IN PALERMO PROVINCE. THE OUTGOING CITY COUNCIL NUMBERS 12 DC, 7 PSI, 2 CIVIC LIST COUNCILORS AND ONE EACH FOR THE PRI, PLI, MSI, AND THE PCI. THE UPCOMING ELECTION FEATURES A CIVIC LIST MADE UP OF THE CITY'S POWERFUL HOTEL OWNERS AND TOURIST OPERATORS WHO ARE STANDING AGAINST THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES, WHICH IN VARYING DEGREES REPRESENT THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS OF LOCAL BUILDING CONTRACTORS.

6. CEFALU' IS TYPICAL OF DEVELOPMENTS, LOCAL NUANCES AND PERSONALITY FEATURES AT PLAY IN OTHER ISLAND TOWNS WHICH WILL VOTE MAY 28-29. BECAUSE OF SUCH FACTORS, AND FACT THAT VOTING SAMPLE IS MUCH REDUCED FROM MAY 14-15 VOTE, UPCOMING ELECTIONS COULD HAVE LITTLE RELEVANCE TO VOTING EARLIER IN MAY OR TO NATIONAL POLITICAL TRENDS. WE WOULD BE LAST TO SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT IMPORTANT NATIONAL LESSONS WILL NOT BE REAL INTO THE RESULTS, WHATEVER THEY ARE. COLLINS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PALERM00557
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780222-0456
Format: TEL
From: PALERMO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780519/aaaaapyz.tel
Line Count: 116
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ecb6ba96-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2569371
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SICILIAN PCI'S SELF-ANALYSIS - MAY 28-29 ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS BEGIN SUMMARY. IN SERIES OF AUTO-CRITICAL PARTY ME
TAGS: PINT, IT, PCI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ecb6ba96-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014